

In the Claims:

Please amend Claims 46, 54, 58, 62 and 63 as follows:

bb
46. (Amended) The method of claim 45, wherein the metallic oxide layer is formed of one selected from the group consisting of Al_2O_3 , TiO_2 , ZrO_2 , Ta_2O_5 and CeO_2 .

b7
54. (Amended) The method of claim 53, wherein the metallic oxide layer is formed of one selected from the group consisting of Al_2O_3 , TiO_2 , ZrO_2 , Ta_2O_5 and CeO_2 .

b8
58. (Amended) A method of forming a protective structure for a ferroelectric dielectric region on an integrated circuit substrate, the method comprising:

depositing a first metal oxide layer of a different material than the ferroelectric dielectric region directly on a surface of the ferroelectric dielectric region;
annealing the first metal oxide layer and the ferroelectric dielectric region; and
depositing a second metal oxide layer on the first metal oxide layer.

b9
62. (Amended) A method of forming a protective structure for a ferroelectric dielectric region on an integrated circuit substrate, the method comprising:

depositing a first metal oxide layer directly on a surface of the ferroelectric dielectric region;
annealing the first metal oxide layer and the ferroelectric dielectric region; and
depositing a second metal oxide layer on the first metal oxide layer,
wherein the first metal oxide layer comprises a metal oxide selected from the group consisting of Al_2O_3 , TiO_2 , ZrO_2 , Ta_2O_5 and CeO_2 ; and
wherein the second metal oxide layer comprises a metal oxide selected from the group consisting of Al_2O_3 , TiO_2 , ZrO_2 , Ta_2O_5 and CeO_2 .

b9
b10

63. (Amended) A method according to Claim 62, wherein the second metal oxide layer is thicker than the first metal oxide layer.

Please add Claims 73-77 as follows:

73. (New) A method according to Claim 58, wherein the first and second metal oxide layers are non-ferroelectric material layers.

74. (New) A method according to Claim 58:
wherein the first metal oxide layer comprises a metal oxide selected from the group consisting of Al_2O_3 , TiO_2 , ZrO_2 , Ta_2O_5 and CeO_2 ; and
wherein the second metal oxide layer comprises a metal oxide selected from the group consisting of Al_2O_3 , TiO_2 , ZrO_2 , Ta_2O_5 and CeO_2 .

75. (New) A method according to Claim 74, wherein the ferroelectric dielectric region comprises a ferroelectric material selected from the group consisting of SrTiO_3 , BaTiO_3 , $(\text{Ba, Sr})\text{TiO}_3$, $\text{Pb}(\text{Zr, Ti})\text{O}_3$, $\text{SrBi}_2\text{Ta}_2\text{O}_9$, $(\text{Pb, La})(\text{Zr, Ti})\text{O}_3$ and $\text{Bi}_4\text{Ti}_3\text{O}_{12}$.

76. (New) A method according to Claim 58, wherein the second metal oxide layer is thicker than the first metal oxide layer.

77. (New) A method according to Claim 62, wherein the ferroelectric dielectric region comprises a ferroelectric material selected from the group consisting of SrTiO_3 , BaTiO_3 , $(\text{Ba, Sr})\text{TiO}_3$, $\text{Pb}(\text{Zr, Ti})\text{O}_3$, $\text{SrBi}_2\text{Ta}_2\text{O}_9$, $(\text{Pb, La})(\text{Zr, Ti})\text{O}_3$ and $\text{Bi}_4\text{Ti}_3\text{O}_{12}$.